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ABSTRACT

The topic of equality in education, as it has existed in post-war Japanese cities to date and as it appears to be changing under the influence of the new high school reforms, are discussed in this paper. The document has gathered together a variety of materials collected rather incidentally, and the information presented in each section focuses on a number of topics briefly. The topics addressed are the following: university entrance, high school entrance in Kobe, the family background of different high school student populations, some considerations on family, neighborhood and achievement before high school, high school sub-cultures, and the movement for high school reform. It is suggested that a critical social issue for modern Japan lies in the growing importance of family background. Postwar education, although more inclusive and democratic, has also become a field of competition in which the trend is toward a greater influence for family background factors. As education becomes more central to more of the populace, it also becomes more and more susceptible to the influence of intensified differences in each family capacity to compete in this arena. (Author:AM)

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IS JAPANESE EDUCATION BECOMING LESS EGALITARIAN? NOTES ON HIGH SCHOOL STRATIFICATION AND REFORM[1]

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That public education during the last century, especially since 1945, has been an important source of upward mobility in Japanese society is a virtually uncontested element in our picture of modern Japan and compared to the rigidity of Edo Period arrangements and their attitudinal legacies this interpretation is undoubtedly correct. The image of the poor, but bright lad who graduates from Tokyo University and eventually wields great power remains widely popular and most certainly this quite romantic portrait serves to color the impression the average man has of Japan's leaders. This notion, in turn, colors his view of such matters as governmental authority, the character of the Japanese elite and, in fact, the very legitimacy of Japan's modern structure.

Educational achievement is not only an avenue to elite status in Japan, it is a widely applied measure of character, ability, and modern virtue. The formula "ability + hard work = educational achievement = elite status" is a powerful one in Japan and its power hinges on the assumption that public education provides a very high degree of equal opportunity. In this paper I will discuss several aspects of the question of educational equality as it has existed in post-war Japanese cities to date and as it appears to be changing under the influence of certain reforms in the high school system.

Equal opportunity, we must remind ourselves, is invariably a complicated matter. Not only is the question of degree involved, both <u>opportunity</u> and <u>outcome</u> are relevant, but quite different, perspectives from which to view the facts.

Furthermore, efforts to make one or another element of a total educational picture more egalitarian may encourage new forms of inequality elsewhere. Examined closely, that is, there are numerous institutional and social facets to the problem of reducing inequality. Equal educational opportunity is the official policy in Japan, of course, and as long as a single measure could be agreed upon, straightforward evaluations might be made, yet the actual story is never nearly so simple when it comes to coordinating the multiplicity of relevant institutional forms with the complex of social forces at work. Only by groping about in a broadly conceived and thus far more complicated and confused educational world are we likely to grasp the realities of educational inequality in Japan and the dynamic that produces them. This paper represents one preliminary effort in that direction based on far less than an exhaustive search for relevant details, but offered all the same because the topic is filled, I think, with surprises and valuable lessons.

I. The University Entrance Picture

For background, it is necessary to go over the facts related to what is generally understood to be a most severe competition to enter universities, especially good ones. In Spring 1975, approximately thirty-five percent of all Japanese eighteen year olds were either entering university or doing a year of further preparatory study as rōnin before retaking the entrance examinations. They were joined in the competition to

enter universities by approximately 140,000 rōnin students from the class of 1974.[2] With about 580,000 university (and junior college) places available at the freshman level, then, the competition ratio stood at 1.3 aspirants per opening. This figure explains the annual production of a large rōnin population, but it does not actually reveal the degree of competition that exists for most universities. Since in 1975 the average aspiring high school senior applied to 3.4 universities or separate departments, in actuality 2,650,000 applications were made for approximately 580,000 places. Actual competition ratios for average to good schools therefore ranged from a low of 4:1 to around 12:1 with medical schools often achieving a spectacular 25:1 and up. The rōnin were, and continue each year to be, aiming at the best schools. Somewhere around eighty percent of all rōnin are males and, in fact, the competition to enter the top quarter of Japanese universities continues to involve primarily males.[3]

Even though the post-war baby boom wave has passed through the secondary schools and the total high school age population has been declining, the decline has been almost compensated for by a steady increase in the percentage of the total proceeding on to high school (which is not part of the compulsory system). In 1955 slightly more than half of all middle school graduates went on to high school. Today the national figure is firmly above 90 percent and in Tokyo it is 96 percent.[4] During the same period there has also been a steady increase in high school graduates continuing into higher

education. While about 19 percent were going to university in 1955, 35 percent are doing so today, and the rate for big city students is approaching 50 percent. In Kobe and other large cities well over two-thirds of all ninth graders express an expectation and a desire to go to university--an illustration of the fact that even the present very high figures do not represent the full demand for higher education. The sum of all of these trends has been the maintenance of an enormous group of competitors for limited university places even though the baby boom has passed and even though there has been a steady advance in the number of university places available during the last two decades.[5]

In response to the heavy demand that developed in the late 50's and through the 60's, private universities, impoverished by inflation and rising costs, admitted more and more students, thus seriously overburdening their faculty and facilities and depreciating the value of their degrees. New, academically weak two and four year universities multiplied rapidly and they too have contributed their part to the general devaluation of the university degree, making good universities more sought after now than ever before. Ironically for a nation with a general policy favoring U.S. style (i.e., broad) higher education, only the national universities have grown slowly and maintained reasonably acceptable standards. While they have always been regarded as top rank, not since Meiji have they so eclipsed all but a few private universities in stature. With the "masses" going to college and the private universities forced

to mass-production techniques, the public universities have more and more become the goal even for the most well-to-do sectors of the population.

The Ministry of Education has periodically used statistics dividing all of the nation's households into five equal-size (20 percent each) strata based on differences of income to examine the nation's university student population to determine the percentage of students from each strata in the total university population. Most recently, the top economic strata in 1974 provided 50 percent of the university student population while from the bottom 20 percent of households came only 8 percent.

(Figure 1)

But since these figures include all sorts of private four year universities and it is common knowledge that the well-off are typically sending their daughters to such schools for "finishing," it could be argued that the figures do not really tell us about the more crucial case of talented students, especially males, going to top schools.

The figures for the national universities (Figure 1A), however, reveal a similar, but somewhat less overwhelming difference. The situation in 1961 would confirm the argument that public higher education was a major source of upward mobility for in that year 19 percent of the students in national universities came from the bottom quintile. A verdict of relatively high equal educational opportunity <u>into the elite at least</u> seems to have been warranted. By 1974, however,

Figure 1

The Percentage of All Students from Each of Five Strata of Households based on Income Differences. (Each strata represents 20 percent of all households in Japan.)

A. National Universities	1961		1965		1970		1974	
I (lowest income)	19.7)		16.3)		17.3)		14.4)	
II	20.2)	39.9	15.1)	31.4	13.9)	31.2	11.2)	25.6
III	15.4		18.6		17.7		16.0	
IV	18.5)		22.5)		21.2)		24.3)	
V (highest income)	26.2)	44.7	27.6)	50.1	29.2)	50.4	34.1)	58.4

B. Private Universities	1961		1965		1970		1974	
I	6.4)		4.8)		5.8)		6.1)	
II	9.2)	15.6	6.8)	11.6	6.1)	11.9	6.5)	12.6
III	12.3		11.1		13.3		11.6	
IV	19.2)		20.9)		22.3)		21.2)	
V	52.9)	72.1	56.4)	77.3	52.5)	74.8	54.6)	75.8

C. Total All 4 year Universities	1961		1965		1970		1974	
I	11.0)		8.3)		8.5)		8.0)	
II	13.1)	24.1	10.4)	18.7	8.0)	16.5	7.5)	15.5
III	13.5		13.4		14.4		12.6	
IV	19.1)		21.7)		22.0)		21.8)	
V	43.2)	62.3	46.2)	67.9	47.0)	69.0	50.1)	71.9

(Source: Mombushō Gakusei Seikatsu Chosa reported in Kosei Hōdō published monthly by the Gakusei Hōdōka of the Mombushō)

37 percent of all students attending national and public universities were from the richest 20 percent of households (an increase of 8 percentage points), while only 14 percent came from the bottom quintile, a decline of five percentage points. The change from 1961 to 1974 appears even more pronounced if the two lowest (I and II) and the two highest (IV and V) strata are combined and compared over the same period. The percentage of students from the bottom two quintiles drops from 39.9 percent to 25.6 while the percentage of students from the upper two strata increase from 44.7 to 58.4.

There are, however, some serious questions that remain about these statistics. First, the national income statistics utilized include households of all kinds including single persons, young couples, and retired people. Given the structure of income in terms of age, we would expect a high proportion of the households in the lowest quintile to contain young or retired wage earners without children in the university age bracket, and as a consequence we would predict on this basis alone that the percentage of university students from households in the lowest income bracket to be relatively low. But just how low is uncertain. The Ministry has never attempted to gather statistics on the relationship of income to educational achievement that focus on households with children of the same age, a remarkable and quite revealing fact in itself. Despite this inadequacy, it could be argued that the <u>trends</u> illustrated in the statistics are reliable, since the definition of household has remained constant. The question remains, however, whether the apparent

shift toward less equality of educational outcome is not largely the result of demographic shifts that have produced more low income/no children households. This is plausible in the light of general demographic shifts in contemporary Japan. Again, how significant this factor is remains difficult to determine with any precision.

If we look closely at the details, however, I think we can conclude that while the definition of household used makes a satisfactory judgment impossible as to the actual percentage of students from each income strata of society, the trends illustrated are reliable indications of an increasing correlation between higher income and educational achievement. I say this because 1) demographic shifts occur much more slowly than the changes in national university statistics show, and 2) because there is very little shift in the private university statistics, a highly unlikely fact if demographic factors are significant.[7]

The figures for national universities, even adjusted for whatever demographic trends might be at play, reveal a significant change in the social complexion of Japanese education. By what processes this change is occurring will be a major concern of the remainder of this paper.

To continue a bit further with some general statistics, a survey conducted by the Instructors Association (Joshūkai) in the School of Engineering at Tokyo University revealed that the average family income of Tokyo University students in 1972 was Y3,250,000 and this was 29 percent above the average for private university students (Y2,580,000). Students in the medical school

at Tokyo University, the very most difficult place to enter in all of Japan today, had family incomes averaging Y230,000 higher than their fellow Tokyo University undergraduates. Contrary to the popular stereotype, the nation's top university contains a large number of students from well-to-do families.[8]

A closely related trend in the case of Tokyo and other top national universities is the emerging dominance of private high schools in the race among secondary schools to place their graduates in the most coveted institutions. Of 4,900 high schools in the country, the top twenty in terms of numbers of graduates entering Tokyo University accounted for no less than 41 percent of the entire freshman class in 1975. Of these top twenty schools, ten were private.[9] Or to take another measure, in 1955, 80 percent of the students admitted to Tokyo from the top ten schools in the nation came from public high schools. Today only 13 percent of the entrants of the top ten schools have been trained in public high schools.[10] Private high schools, that is, are gradually coming to dominate elite secondary education.[11] Private high school graduates entering Tokyo in 1975 and 1976 comprised over one-third of the freshman class. While this trend is not as pronounced for other national universities as it is for Tokyo, clearly changes of great significance have been occurring in recent years. To find out what they are, we must focus our attention downward to the level of secondary education where the actual interplay between the educational system and family background is more apparent.

II. Getting Into High School in Kobe

Although the attention of Western scholars has been focused primarily on the problem of college entrance in Japan and particularly on the formation of future elites at this juncture, the time of high school entrance represents an even more crucial juncture in the total process of educational stratification in Japan. The entire population of students are involved, not just the college-bound minority, and the educational tracks into which students are shunted at this stage are both more diverse and more fundamental to their ultimate social identities. We must realize that ranking of high schools in a given locale is as clear if not clearer than for universities on a national scale. At the local level, what high school a person attends carries lifetime significance and the finely etched stereotypes of student character associated with each high school becomes an indelible part of individual identity. At the high school level in Kobe, where I did field work for one year during 1974-75, the various spectrum of differences in such things as academic ability, career prospects, family background, and school reputation are all tightly interwoven into a single hierarchically ordered fabric. Furthermore, these differences have marked significance for the actual conduct and ethos of each school. Urban high school sub-cultures, that is, illustrate a definite tendency to stratify in a manner parallel to social class stereotypes.

In the spring of 1975, 15,103 students graduated from junior high schools in Kobe and of these 95 percent indicated a

preference to go on to high school. A poll of these students the previous autumn revealed that fully 80 percent wanted to matriculate to public, "academic" high schools. We must note at this point that the three top boys' private schools in Kobe, which draw the top 1-2 percent of students from the entire Kobe-Osaka region admit primarily at the junior high school level, thus, it is the remaining 99 percent of the students that we are considering at this point. Because their costs are low, public schools are definitely preferred by most ninth graders. And because prestige is high and the chances of going on to college much greater, public "academic" high schools are the most preferable (after the top elite private schools). Public vocational high schools have the advantage of low tuition, but the disadvantage of not being geared to university preparation. Due to a continuing lack of space in public, academic schools (only 6,165 places were available), however, no more than 40 percent of each year's junior high school graduates can enter public high schools designed for university preparation. Figure 2 helps us understand the actual fate of Kobe's junior high school graduates in 1972. The ratios continue to be much the same today.

Figure 2

Table A. Percentage of Total High School Student Population by Type of School--Public or Private (1972)

1.	Public	54.0
	a. prefectural	30.1
	b. city	23.9
2.	Private	46.0

Table B. Percentage of Total High School Student Population by Type of School--Curriculum (1972)

1.	Academic (public and private)	63.4
2.	Vocational	23.3
	a. industrial	8.9
	b. commercial	14.4
	c. other	3.7
3.	Night school (primarily vocational)	8.9

Once the approximately eight percent that did not go on to high school (in 1972) are added, we have an outline of the rudimentary categories into which the entire spectrum of fifteen year olds in the city is divided. These categories are inevitably ranked in popular thought. Academic schools are always superior to vocational schools and vocational schools, in turn, are always ranked above night schools. There are both elite private schools (very few in number) and low stature private schools (numerous).

Of course, at the very bottom of this elaborate totem pole are those whose education terminates with junior high school graduation.

High school entrance procedures vary today from city to city in Japan--one example of post-war local government autonomy. In Osaka, entrance is governed solely by examination, much as in the case of universities. Each student is limited to applying to only one public high school per year and, as at the university level, this creates a small population of fifteen and sixteen year old "rōnin." In Tokyo, on the other hand, as the result of a recent reform (to be discussed later), many students are assigned to a public, academic high school by a computer once they qualify in a general examination.

Kobe's system is close to Osaka's (and most other large cities'), with the special twist that teacher recommendations, grades, and aptitude tests are used in "guiding" students to take the exam for the public high school most suited to their ability. Entrance examinations are given by all public high schools, yet there is almost no competition at exam time to enter the public, academic schools, because on a city-wide basis teachers have carefully adjusted the total they advise to apply to each school. The chance of failure for top students is minimized as a result. But for the public vocational schools (which represent the last chance for a public, inexpensive high school education) the competition is quite serious with from 10 to 20 percent of all applicants turned away on the basis of examination results. Students may take only one public high school's exam each year and failure on that exam sends them (in effect) to a low status private school. In Kobe's essentially

"unreformed" system we can easily find the reasons for attempts at reform such as have occurred recently in Tokyo.

The heart of Kobe's high school system is its "large district" form of organization. Within the city's three large high school districts are many public high schools and application to any one of them is open to a resident of the district. Consequently there is competition (focused on good grades leading to a high teacher evaluation at entrance time) and a thorough system of ranking among the schools of each district. Each level of academic ability is shipped off to a separate high school. Students in their last year of junior high school are sorted on a one to ten scale and it is into even more narrow strata that they are separated in the process of being advised to apply to particular high schools. This practice annually confirms the ranking of all high schools, a ranking that embraces the private school world, too, although the story there is somewhat more complicated.

The very top private high schools in Kobe today are head and shoulders superior (in the academic sense) to the best in the public system. They take their students aboard strictly through competitive examinations and typically students are accepted for six years of schooling, beginning with seventh grade. Only the top one percent of sixth graders are encouraged to apply. Elite schools of this sort, however, are but a small percentage of the private schools in the city. It is important to note also, that they have gradually emerged as academic power houses in the post-war period with acceleration of this trend during the last ten years.

Another small group of private schools are ranked more or less parallel to the better public, academic high schools. These schools take their students from 1) those few who fail the examinations to the better public high schools and 2) families willing to pay for a higher level of schooling than their child's teacher has "recommended." As upper and middle class parental displeasure with public schooling increases, these second rank private schools get more and better students and as a consequence their place in the overall city-wide ranking based on university entrance performance is raised. Recently, such schools have been moving up steadily.

Paralleling this middle-level set of schools are some girls' schools with the aura of finishing schools. They are not critically involved with the overall academic competition, yet neither are they repositories of the academically least qualified.

The largest set of private high schools, however, have been traditionally at or near the bottom of the secondary school hierarchy, usually standing just above night schools. Essentially they exist to serve the students who fail to enter even public vocational high schools--typically the bottom quarter of junior high school graduating classes. Obviously, competition and the anxiety over entrance to high school is not simply an elite or middle class phenomenon in Japan, but as our attention passes from areas of high academic performance to those involving the bottom one-third of the junior high school graduating population, we find parental concern shifting from the goal of university attendance to that of saving the family money in the process of

gaining a high school diploma and perhaps saving the child from a bad reputation as a graduate of a low status school. Private high schools charge approximately $600-700 per year plus a sizable entrance fee and in Kobe the majority of parents shouldering this not inconsequential burden do so not out of ambition for their child's university chances, but simply because he or she has performed below average academically and cannot enter public high school.[12] Since there is a solid correlation between family impoverishment and poor school performance (as we shall see), it is clear that typically the costs of private schooling fall most heavily on families least able to afford them. These families are not only reluctant to carry this extra economic burden, but they are often anxious that their children avoid the problems of delinquency and peer group troubles associated with the worst private schools. The fact they send their children to high school at all is vivid testimony to the powerful drive at all levels of society for attaining "at least" a high school education, even if the content is so poor as to have primarily negative influence on the students, a fact I believe to be true in at least thirty percent of Kobe's high schools today.[13] The crucial point here, however, is that the shortage of public high schools clearly works to the disadvantage of the less well off.

It may come as no surprise, but virtually every kind of statistical measure of student attitude and conduct, from arrests for delinquency and rates of student absenteeism to hours of nightly homework and the incidence of part-time jobs, varies

uniformly over the ranking of high schools in significant ways.[14]

III. The Family Background of Different High School Student Populations

Next let us examine the social correlates of academic achievement over the range of Kobe's high school student population. I spent from one to two months in each of five high schools in the city selected to represent various points on the spectrum of ranking. Unfortunately, I could not arrange to visit a private high school in the low status category (for reasons clearly related to their poor reputation and internal troubles), but I was able to attend classes, interview teachers, witness school life in general, and collect statistical material in the following kinds of schools:

a) the nation's top private school (Nada High School).

b) a prefectural academic high school of second rank.

c) a city academic high school of high third rank.

d) a city vocational (commercial) high school.

e) a city, night vocational (industrial) school.

From the beginning of my work in Kobe, teachers intimated that the social background of students differed from school to school and they were quite apt to use this as an explanation for differences in student conduct and school morale. After confirming this impression myself by reviewing each school's family information cards for large numbers of students (detailing residence, members of the family, and parental work place) I composed a questionnaire that hopefully would produce considerably

greater detail without transgressing certain limits imposed on me by the faculties of the various schools. In every school I was precluded from asking about family income and minority status, and one school's faculty felt the matter of parental education was too sensitive to be permitted on a questionnaire (even one to be filled out anonymously!). The need for indirectness caused me to focus on particular conditions in the household typically associated with income and socio-economic status. I asked about the number of the student's siblings, their fathers' and mothers' work, their parents' education (not answered by students of the prefectural school), whether they had a room where they could study relatively undisturbed, how much homework they did each night, what and how much they read and whether they had attended a tutoring school or been tutored at home during elementary and junior high school. My sample of eleventh graders ranged from nine percent of the school and 28 percent of the class (in the case of the prefectural academic high school) to 16 percent of the school and 50 percent of the class for the elite private school. Due to the small number of students in the night vocational school (206 students) and the low attendance rate there (only slightly over 50 percent most nights) I was forced to give questionnaires to students in all four grades.[15] For this school I have responses from 41 percent of the entire student population.

The responses combined for each school into percentage formulations and then compared from school to school by item clearly reveal a significant level of variation in socio-economic background

across the ranking of schools. The portrait that emerges is a striking one in my opinion and the material behind the statistics has even more to say about intra-school differences. First, consider Figure 3. We see a common pattern that holds across the variety of family background items. Attending the lower

(Figure 3)

ranked schools (and this means students who have been doing poorly before entering high school) are students that typically come from larger families, a fair number of whom are missing one or both parents, their mothers are more likely to work, their fathers' educational level is comparatively low. Many have no place to study at home and a significantly larger proportion did not receive special tutoring when young. The matter of parental occupation is difficult to express statistically due to the infinitely complex issue of categorization and to the variety of vague labels and euphemisms utilized by students, especially when the work carried some stigma. A bar hostess mother, for example, may be said to work in the "service industry." The schools' information cards, while also vague in many cases, provided a slightly clearer picture. Let us consider one class of forty-five from the daytime vocational high school and a group of 100 from the elite private school for the purposes of rough approximation.

Figure 3

Family Background and High School Attendance

	Private Academic Elite	Prefectural Academic 2nd Rank	City Academic High 3rd Rank	City Vocational	City Nighttime Vocational
1. Average number of siblings in family	2.1	2.3	2.4	2.8	2.9
2. Percentage of working mothers in sample	15%	22%	21%	30%	34%
3. Percentage missing one or both parents	1%	.07%	2%	13%	15%
4. Percentage of students' fathers with university education (including senmon gakko)	69%	---	33%	6%	2%
5. Percentage of sample with their own room for study	99%	86%	77%	71%	58%
6. Attended tutoring or cram school at some time	91%	78%	68%	57%	39%
a) during elementary school	74%	43%	37%	40%	24%
7. Burakumin as percentage of student body*	0	18/1215 (1.4%)	27/1220 (2.2%)	60/1209 (4.9%)	12/206 (5.8%)
8. Koreans as percentage of student body*	0	26/1215 (2.1%)	17/1220 (1.3%)	46/1209 (3.8%)	1/206 (.5%)

*Based on statistics kept by school officials.

Public Daytime Vocational High School	Private Elite High School
"company employee" - 18	"company employee" - 41
taxi drivers - 4	"company executive" - 16
home businesses (shops, factories) - 6	professor - 2
post office - 1	Christian minister - 1
sailor - 1	doctor - 10
longshoreman - 1	public employee - 8
restaurant worker - 1	industrial worker - 1
seamstress - 1	teacher - 3
"office workers" - 5	self-employed - 11
construction - 2	policeman - 1
golf club employee - 1	small manufacturer - 1
factory laborer - 2	barber - 1
metal worker - 5	deceased - 1
welder - 1	unclear - 3
music teacher - 1	
ship repair - 1	
out of work fathers - 5	
deceased fathers - 5	

A similar inventory for the night school I studied indicates a higher proportion of fathers in agriculture, transport, and construction work than is represented in the daytime vocational high school, and the category of "company employee" is smaller yet. All of this, of course, is perfectly consistent with the overall portrait of fathers' educational backgrounds.

Add to this profile the fact that the working mothers of the students of the elite private school (15 out of 100) were

typically working as teachers (3), doctors (1) and other high status occupations. Only one, the only widow in the group, could be said to have a menial job--that of caretaker of an apartment house. Mothers of the vocational school students not only were more likely to be employed, they were characteristically employed in jobs of average to low status.

These figures speak eloquently of the fact that Japanese secondary education witnesses a serious separation and ranking of students that is highly correlated with matters of general social stratification. The term class might also be appropriate, if it could only capture the nuance of the Japanese predilection for almost unlimited enumeration of ranked distinctions. This habit of mind and quality of society create not large self-conscious masses, but wafer-thin social strata. Education today is the most crucial criteria for this stratification and the preceding statistics illustrate just how far the present system is from open mobility when the results are examined closely.

The role of family background factors in differentiating performance has, of course, come into its own as a consideration of great significance in the analysis of educational outcomes in the United States. We can certainly add Japan to the list, especially since its pattern of greater urban residential integration and greater national standardization (of educational content, school facilities, and pedagogical techniques) highlights the particular complex of family factors as crucial to explaining most difference in educational outcomes.

Furthermore, we have learned enough about the characteristics of the student body of one particular elite private high school to understand much more about the reasons why Tokyo University students today are more representative of the upper than any other strata of society. The private school represented in my study, incidentally, has been sending about half of its 220 graduating seniors to that university annually since 1969 (the total entering freshman class at Tokyo was 3,079 in 1975). It is schools like Nada that have been dominating the Tokyo University entrance picture lately. We still have not explored why such elite private education is increasingly significant.

IV. Private Efforts to Supplement Education

Students attending elite private high schools typically enter this inside track at the seventh grade level meaning that in the minds of most parents, particularly urban parents, the first six grades are as crucial to the race to enter top universities as are any succeeding levels. It has long been common knowledge that upper middle class Japanese parents place great emphasis on getting their children into even the best kindergartens. This seemingly ridiculous level of academic ambition has not changed, but now the critical goal for educated, upper and even middle class families is to have a bright child (especially, of course, a son) academically primed for the private school entrance exams at the end of sixth grade. It is

almo[illegible]nheard of to leave this crucial matter exclusively in the hands of elementary school teachers, especially since today most of them candidly admit a personal revulsion with the university entrance syndrome. Tutors (katei kyoshi) and cram schools (juku), heavy parental attention and every sort of special study aid and gimmick are the solutions to which parents turn, and quite naturally competition to master more and more material earlier and earlier develops among the children submitted to this regime.

Here is where the preceding figures on tutoring become highly relevant. Tutoring is now even becoming common for families in lower income brackets and for high level academic achievement it has become virtually mandatory. The typical after-school tutoring "academy" is a neighborhood affair costing on the average of Y4,400 a month (in 1974). A private tutor costs three times this amount. The costs of study aids, such as practice test forms and encyclopedias of exam-relevant facts, can mount up. In Kobe, a recent survey indicated more than half of all sixth graders receiving extra academic attention of this sort. None of these by now almost normal supplementary activities compares with the costs in time and money involved in a high-powered cram effort--the kind more and more bright, urban, middle and upper middle class children are undergoing in the large cities in order to meet the competition to enter the best private secondary schools. Such cram schools, typically offering courses that involve three-hour classes almost every night (and sometimes all day Sundays), study camps in the summer, frequent

tests, and a frankly competitive atmosphere for elementary and junior high students, have been rapidly growing in number and public attention.

One of these special cram schools in Osaka is widely known as the best embarkation point for attempts to enter the top private schools at the tightly circumscribed high school level. Nada High School, for example, accepts only fifty students at this late stage. Twenty percent of these come from this one cram school. The crucial point is that cram schools themselves become ranked and entering (or staying in) them often becomes more of a critical issue in one's progress along the educational elite course than anything that transpires on the public school side of a student's academic existence.

In each large city, to take this point one step further, the top post-high school cram schools (yobiko) are considered harder to enter than the top public high schools. In Kobe, the best yobiko boasts an acceptance rate to Tokyo University (i.e., the number of rōnin students it enrolled that entered Tokyo) better than any of the top public high schools in the city, even though its enrollment is very small. Tuition to these schools varies but is never small, and in the case of post-high school yobiko there is the added financial burden on the family of supporting the student at home for an extra year or more. In 1975, 45 percent of Tokyo University entering freshmen had been rōnin for a year (35%) or more (10.2%) and the very great majority of these undoubtedly attended top cram schools while they waited to try again.

Public school officials are particularly appalled at the growth of super-cram schools at the lower levels, for they have begun to supersede the regular public school instruction (especially in philosophy, pace, and balance of subjects). In a nation long known for its exam oriented education and stiff educational competition, the new cram schools thus represent a further escalation of this old tendency, one that underlines the tremendous drive for educational achievement present in most levels of society. This drive, however, is finding expression primarily in the private spheres of education as steps to undercut or at least dampen the exam oriented competition syndrome are effected in the public school system.

It came as quite a revelation to me to discover that Japanese educational research has not yet penetrated to the heart of the general question of relative parental pressure and attention regarding educational achievement in different types of families. It is possible I have not located the relevant sources, but after looking and asking during one year I encountered little detailed research in this area. One exception is the work of Professor Fukaya Masashi who studied 393 sixth graders in three elementary schools in very different areas (an upper middle class district, an urban lower class district, and a regional city district).[16] He concludes that student accomplishment strongly reflects parental expectations, wishes, and attention. School subjects receiving parental emphasis because of their centrality to examinations, such as math, were examined. Although math was universally the least popular subject

among students, those from families with higher educational backgrounds, better incomes, and higher academic expectations performed considerably better than the average. The author quite rightly underscored the total effect of family background, especially the level of parental attention and assistance given to the child's study. His findings about the relationship of selected family factors and math test scores are worth considering in detail. The average score is treated here as 1.0.

Figure 4

1.	Father's work	blue collar .34	white collar .95	specialist 1.33
2.	Monthly income	less than ¥150,000 .70	¥150-200,000 1.05	above ¥200,000 1.28
3.	Number of children	three or more .82	two 1.02	one 1.18
4.	Mother's work	employed .80	housewife 1.12	
5.	Hours of nightly study	two hours .76	two-three hours .76	three or more hours 1.15
6.	Special study	private tutor .45	independent .93	prep. academy 1.5

While in his article the subject is not discussed, we can assume a high correlation between attendance at a private preparatory academy and the prior demonstration of outstanding ability on the child's part. Private tutors, on the other hand, tend to be hired to aid children having difficulty in school. Fukaya also reports that 94% of the mothers expected their sons to attend university, but only 75% expected this of their daughters.

In summary, cram materials, private tutors, special schools, private elite high schools, and the many other aids to

educational success that are purchased on the market by parents acting in a private capacity all have the affect of creating less equality of educational outcome. Families are not equal in their capacities to compete in the "private sphere," that extensive part of education over which public schools and public policy have little or no influence. Nor is the question of inequality just a matter of income differentials, although this appears to be a central and increasingly important factor. Children of teachers do very well in Japan despite parental income, for example, while rich and poor families in rural areas suffer a disadvantage because tutors, cram schools, and so forth, are not available. Economic resources, in other words, are but part of the total family resources relevant to a student's success in school.

The question remains as to the relative importance of the "private sector" in the overall outcome. Obviously, the enormous drive of most Japanese parents to assure their children a satisfactory future social status through educational achievement generates much of the dynamic behind the "private sector," but this is only part of the story for what occurs in the area of public education is also very relevant.

The establishment of greater equality of educational <u>opportunity</u> in the public school system rather than cooling off parental (and student) drive is only likely to encourage more "private sector" activity given the high level of competitiveness focused on educational achievement. Secondly, since private goals of educational success are dominant in the minds of most

parents, their appreciation of public schooling will focus on the advantages their children's public schools provide in the overall competition. As Japanese post-war public education has periodically attempted to extricate itself from the exam competition syndrome, it has diminished its value in the eyes of parents. Thus, increased parental reliance on private sector education can be seen as to some degree stimulated by public school policies that deemphasize exam oriented preparation.

The clearest illustration of this sort of relationship between the public and private sectors can be found in recent efforts to eliminate the area of greatest inequality of opportunity in the public school system--the ranking of high schools. This and other recent reform efforts, I believe, help explain the growing correlation between elite university attendance and high family income discussed at the beginning of this paper.

V. The Movement for High School Reform

After almost three decades of neglect while elementary and university education shared the spotlight of attention and reform, high school education has recently attained center stage. Long before the new Minister of Education, Nagai Michio, announced to the press that reform at the high school level would pave the way for university reform, city and prefectural school boards throughout Japan had been laying cautious plans to end the rigid academic hierarchy among public high schools through a combination of redistricting and redefinition of the function of entrance

exams. The specific plans and their timetables varied greatly according to locale. In some places the new high school entrance system (known generally as sōgō senbatsu seido because choice for individual and school alike were being eliminated in favor of egalitarian procedures based on residence) has been in existence for some time.

The occupation, of course, set out to achieve a rather similar reform in 1946 and a close look at the history of education in any locality will reveal that the occupation's reforms were instituted for at least a few years. In Kobe, and I assume in most other cities, the American-inspired high school system faced enormous difficulties due to 1) the lack of schools, 2) traditional understandings of high schools as places for university preparatory training, 3) the weight of each school's tradition within the old differentiated and ranked system, and 4) the general social and economic chaos of the times. With few schools (none of which had been initially located with districting criteria in mind) and most of them adamantly vocational or academic in tradition and preference, city school officials in 1946 were presented with almost insurmountable problems in sorting out students, on the one hand, and attempting to merge, integrate, divide, and in other ways transform high school facilities and faculties on the other. With no money to build new high schools (a matter of local finance under the occupation's reform) and heavy pressure from large numbers of applicants, the City Board of Education between 1951 and 1953 progressively retreated from the position of one district-one

high school to a plan, still in effect today, in which the city was divided into three approximately equal "large districts," (each today with about eight public high schools). Vocational and academic high schools were successfully merged in only one case. The old elite public schools became the new elite public schools (one in each of the three districts) resting at the top of "large district" based hierarchies. As new public schools were built they joined the status ladder at the bottom.

Regardless of what historians of the national scene might say about a reactionary overturn of the occupation's reforms, in this specific case local officials clearly had little if any choice other than retreat, a point readily acknowledged by the local teachers' union. The American plan simply did not take account of the enormous problems involved in attempting to convert an elite oriented arrangement to what in principle was a system of universal high school education. Without the means to build the necessary schools and without a gradual timetable to allow skillful management of the very real problems each school had in making the adjustment the chaos could not be controlled.[17]

Today these prior conditions are much closer to being met. Nearly all urban children are going to high school and while many are forced to attend low status private schools, the number of public high schools has increased greatly since the early fifties. Officials feel the time is right to end the present "large district" system and, in doing so, end the problems of gross differences among high school sub-cultures

and the educational advantages and disadvantages they represent. The reform movement, then, is in one sense restorational, since the precedent for all this lies buried in the occupation's legacy and, of course, behind that in an inclusive, egalitarian philosophy of secondary education. Ironically, American educational reform today seems headed in the opposite direction, being aimed at superseding the effects of its traditional one district-one high school policy. Our recent trend, however, is of limited instructive value, Japanese friends say, for the obvious reason that Japanese cities are not nearly as segregated into ethnic, racial, and class based neighborhoods. I think they may be wrong in ignoring reform experiences elsewhere and a consideration of educational reform in Japan's largest city should make my reasons clear.

But first we must ask from what quarter has the inspiration and pressure for this reform arisen? The teachers in lower status public high schools, to begin with, bear the greatest burden in the present system for teaching conditions are indeed difficult in their schools. Furthermore, public high school teachers generally feel uneasiness with the present exclusively academic hierarchy among high schools, because it is a telling illustration of the fact that high schools are but passive, servile elements in the overall system of educational status. That is, high school teachers generally are cast in the rather narrow role of tutors for the university entrance exams. Some may thank their stars that they are not in "troubled" low status schools, but most share a feeling that reform is needed if Japanese secondary

education is to get back on the right track. The teachers' union voices these serious concerns and adds a third criticism. As presently constituted, the high school entrance system results in proportionally many more children of poor families, if they go to high school at all, having to attend the expensive (but low quality) private schools. The High School Teachers' Union in Kobe, for example, is headed up by Communist Party members and inequities of this sort are matters they naturally target for persistent criticism. Finally, the School Board, agreeing with teachers and the union, has worked hard to establish reforms. It shares all of the above concerns, but seems most interested in eliminating the very poor and deteriorating educational atmosphere found in the lower strata of the public high schools. It is my impression that behind reform of high schools throughout Japan, one is likely to find much the same combination of inside forces.

It is rare indeed for teachers, school boards, and the union to see eye to eye in Japan and most certainly there are many teachers rather sceptical about reform, just as there are many disagreements over details among the various supporting parties. The fact is, however, that a sense of deep dismay about secondary education exists--focused both on the "examination hell" syndrome that affects the more able students from elementary school on and the inequities and demoralization that await the less able. High school reform has had great appeal within educational circles because it appears to provide answers ultimately to both kinds of problems, and because it could be

undertaken by each prefecture or large city without entanglement in the politics of national educational policy, something not true of university level reform.

The progressive parties, incidentally, are encouraging the movement while the Liberal Democratic party remains rather reluctant, but publicly noncommital. Both sides naturally hope to make political hay on this issue as it develops.

The conservatives may well have chosen the more popular cause in political terms, however, for there has been much public opposition to the reform idea. The reasons many parents oppose reform are somewhat hard to nail down in precise terms. Awareness of status distinctions does not undermine the readiness of many to remain convinced, however, that the present form of public high school education offers equality of opportunity. What parents worry most about is any development that threatens the opportunity for their children to retain at least the social status level the family presently has achieved. The school board's and union's problem in urging reform, therefore, has not been one of having to prove that differences of family background are involved (which may explain the lack of detailed studies), but rather of establishing that the high school level pattern of differentiation is unjust and impractical for society, while simultaneously trying to convince a majority of parents that no fundamental threat to their children's future status is involved.

Privately, middle class Japanese seem generally convinced that school performance is a reflection of the character of the student and the household. Divorce or many children or a lack

of parental discipline, they intuitively feel, are not the fault of the school system, but of the parents. Quite naturally these factors affect a student's ability to do well in school. Schools to them are not properly instruments of social leveling, but arenas of fair competition. Good students, people will say, come from stable, hard working, educated and, most of all, concerned families. If families are well off, their success is also an illustration of the same point, good family character. There is no denying that for just about every doctor's (rich) son in elite Nada High School there is a school teacher's (average middle class) son. The enormous difference between the number of doctors and teachers in the total Kobe population and the likelihood that teachers' children are a special middle class anomaly in terms of educational achievement are not, however, widely considered. People opposing reform are firm in their belief that there is formal equal opportunity in the public schools (all the while straining every effort to get their children into a "better" school), and they will always have before them the exceptional cases of "rags to Todai" that illustrate this notion.

But more crucial than rationalizations and abstract perspectives is the dismay middle and upper class parents experience when they realize that reform may disadvantage their own. The present system rewards the great Japanese values of hard work, family concern and stability. It also rewards advantages like income and parental education, but these are rarely mentioned. Parents work hard, their children are working

hard. Why should such virtue be punished? Whether people feeling this way are a majority cannot be proven, but clearly they are the most vociferous. The families most certain to benefit from high school reform, the poor, have spokesmen in educational circles, but as a group they are not politically active and often they share the same viewpoint as the middle class regarding the rewards of hard work.

So while the teachers' union, leftist groups, and school boards push for reform, the general population of parents remains unconvinced and often adamantly opposed to any changes that will work against the chances of their own children in the educational race. Finally, while it would be erroneous to say that parents like the enormous pressure exams put on their children, most remain convinced that objective exams and high school stratification represent the only way to give the best students a chance to the best education. In the competition with the best students of other cities to enter the top universities they need the education that only first class public high schools can provide. The parental view of education as a crucial status race, thus, has made high school reform a very tricky business.

Before considering the results of high school reform in Tokyo, it will be instructive to review the state of affairs in other notable localities. Kobe's large district system is still in effect, but the school board has for the last few years been committed "in principle" to reform and working plans have been drawn up. Osaka is in a similar position. In fact, most large cities are fence-sitting at present waiting for the results from the experiment in Tokyo to be conclusive.

Kyoto is unique for it has the distinction of being the only major Japanese city not to have retreated from the one district-one high school system set up during the occupation. This fact is the pride and joy of the teachers' union there and it remains a notable testimony to the influence of the city's long post-war history of progressive political power. Critics of reform, on the other hand, are quick to point out that because of its educational system, Kyoto has a distinctly poor record of getting its own students into Kyoto and other prestigious national universities.[18]

Reform in smaller cities is publicly treated as successful, although on the scene comments are much more sceptical. In Nishinomiya, Yamaguchi City, and in some other similar places districting reforms seemed to have caused no noticeable reduction in the area's competitive ability to place students in good universities. Nor has public opposition continued strong. Big city proponents of reform are captivated by these small city examples, it appears, just as American occupation officials seem to have been captivated by the American system as it worked say in Kansas. In Nishinomiya and Yamaguchi the number of public high schools is quite small and the move to equality and sameness among high schools faces fewer problems than in larger cities. The high school systems in "reformed" smaller cities now closely resemble their American counterparts, at least on paper.

The same cannot be said for Tokyo. There a great furor has arisen over reform with the school board first moving strongly to redistrict and then floundering with no clear direction some

years later in the face of parental opposition and the clear fact that the public high schools were losing increasingly large numbers of good students to private schools of the academic kind. Once such a trend is underway it has a tendency to snowball, of course, and the stalling of high school reform in Tokyo is a clear acknowledgment of this problem on the part of reform minded officials.[19]

In 1967 Tokyo had 89 public, academic daytime high schools parceled out into 13 "large" districts. Hibiya, Toyama, Nishi and several other of the city's public high schools were the best in Japan as indicated by their remarkable ability to place so many of their graduates in Tokyo University. A past vice principal of Hibiya is quoted in a newspaper interview as saying as many as half of that school's entering class each year actually resided outside the school's district (some coming from Kyushu even), so great was the interest in the preparatory training offered. That year Hibiya was number one in the nation in number of graduates entering Tokyo University, a position it had held since 1953.

1967 was also the first year of Tokyo's high school reform. In that year new districts were drawn on the basis of the city's ward boundaries. Each of the nine new districts contained a handful of "groups" of two to three high schools each (thus the title gakkōgun seido). Only the city's academic, daytime high schools were involved, a fact that meant that, even if successful, this reform would not eliminate the differences between academic and vocational schools.

Students resident in a district applied to the "group" of their choice. If successful on the entrance exam to the "group" they were assigned to one of the schools in the "group" by an automatic process designed to fully equalize the ability of students within the member high schools of each "group." Students, that is, could choose a "group," but not a particular high school.

Originally, the school board had intended to place schools with formerly high and low reputations together in the same groupings, but popular pressure forced them to back away from this approach in several significant instances. That is, while most "groups" came out looking more or less balanced, a few came out looking very desirable because they contained only schools of previous distinction.

Thus parents and students found themselves confused about procedures and worried about the random qualities of assignment introduced, and yet the new arrangement began as something considerably short of a total reform. In the last eight years, the question of extending the reform has been thoroughly overwhelmed by the question of what to do to keep the public school system from losing its viability due to parental displeasure.

At first some parents on discovering that the school the computer had selected for their child was not the one they hoped for began taking up the private school option. Top students, more and more, were also shifted out of the public school picture by the fact that formerly top public schools were declining in quality. The top private schools more and more appeared to offer

a competitive advantage. And, naturally, as a result of this sort of shift of talent, the reputations of a number of private schools improved greatly. The supreme goal of parental effort came to focus on entrance to one of the elite private schools and since many of these accept students at the seventh grade level or earlier, the time of most intense entrance competitions among the most talented and those with ambitious parents shifted to the latter years of elementary school.

The statistic of most relevance here is the percentage of Tokyo junior high school graduates accepted into a public high school who end up entering a private school instead. In 1974 this figure was 12.4 percent of all graduates and it had been steadily climbing since 1967. A 1969 survey of this group revealed that it was largely male and largely headed for academically strong private schools. The actual number that have shifted to private schools is undoubtedly larger, however, for these statistics fail to note those never taking the exams for public schools at all. In 1975, to take a documented year, over fifteen percent of all junior high school graduates did not bother to take the public exams in addition to the over 12 percent who went to private schools after being accepted by a public one. Since 96% of all graduates go on to high school in Tokyo, we can conclude that by 1975 one-quarter of all students were <u>preferring</u> private schooling. Over the period, the competition ratios to enter the better private schools typically doubled.

Following in the wake of this trend came a gradual decline in average measured aptitude for Tokyo public high school students

and a decline in their rate of entrance to public and national universities. In 1967, 23.1 percent of the graduating seniors from Tokyo's public, academic high schools entered public or national universities, but by 1973 the percentage had dropped to 17.6. There was a parallel rise in private university attendance from Tokyo public high schools over the same period, indicating how good high schooling (even at some expense) pays off by opening the doors to inexpensive, prestige public universities. Take Tokyo University, for example. The top six public high schools in the capital sent slightly over 600 entering freshmen in 1967, but by 1974 the entire Tokyo public high school system could place no more than 391. Private schools during the same period came to dominate the ubiquitous charts of Japan's best ten high schools. Hibiya High School by 1975 had dropped out of the spotlight altogether, while private Nada High School in Kobe gained and defended the top position during all but one year.

But for all the clamor about lost distinction and the loss of talented students, the figures also illustrated the fact that the new system was not going to produce the degree of equality its proponents had hoped. First of all, a comparison of national university (ikki) entrance rates for different high school "groups" in the city revealed significant differences. One comprised of three former elite schools (including Hibiya) had succeeded in placing 142 students in some national university while another "group" with no such former elite schools placed none. Ranking may have been eliminated from the level of specific

schools, but "groups" now are ranked. The social class quality of various districts as well as the previous status of high schools both help explain this irony. Many people also blamed the teachers' union for blocking teacher transfers (which in theory should equalize the quality of teaching in every "group"). The pro-reform union, thus, found itself with an unexpected hot potato.

Nor had reform been addressed to the problems of vocational and night schools. They remained ranked below public academic high schools, of course. Furthermore, the shift at the top, out to top quality private schools left openings in public academic high schools for students who previously would not have qualified, and by such a chain reaction, vocational and night schools, I feel certain (although I have seen no facts) experienced their own "brain drains." And this in turn would have allowed more of the students in the bottom quartile to avoid the costs of private schooling. It is amazing to me that no analysis of Tokyo's reform I have seen has clarified this point for it is at this lowest level that many beneficial changes may have actually occurred. Japan's poor are not politically vocal and even among reform minded educators there is some deeply rooted instinct at work which prevents them from making public very much information about the relationships between the bottom of the social and educational worlds.

We do know most certainly that a new ranking system has emerged, that it is increasingly dominated by private schools and that it is as competitive and almost as finely graded as before.

Now, however, the role of family background may have been altered to a greater emphasis on wealth for the costs of private sector competition, especially private high schooling, must be prohibitive for many families regardless of their children's talents. There are virtually no scholarships to private schools in Japan.

The shift to private schooling by perhaps most of the top quarter of the students has also revealed the lesson that public school policy, at least at the high school level, could not unilaterally control the shape of education and educational change in the big cities, a point American experience might have taught. The option of private schooling in Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya, and Kobe is sufficiently broad that significant declines in the quality of public high school student populations (as Japanese view them) can occur very rapidly, and for all the bravado of the reformers' claims that the well off and especially able should not be the public system's main concern, the fact remains that a new kind of inequality--one in which wealth and elite educational opportunities are closely tied together and institutionalized--has emerged as a result of their efforts. The higher costs of private universities await those middle class and lower class average students who may have avoided the costs of private secondary schools, but lost out in the opportunity to enter public universities by doing so.[20]

In retrospect, it seems that while Tokyo residentially is rather heterodox by American standards, one factor seldom considered in the city's portrait is the very significant degree

to which the old "large district" arrangement allowed status differences to be expressed and preserved (in terms of education) without residential segregation. That is, the possibility of gaining educational advantage in the public system was not tied closely to residence when it came to high schools. Most parents, although very anxious, must have felt that the public system offered considerable promise in terms of the formula "ability + hard work = success." Traditional family virtues and future social status were thus tied together as very meaningful to most. The reforms did not end their interest in and anxiety over these things, quite the contrary. Instead, they extended, complicated, and raised the cost of educational competition as understood by the "middle class," and in Tokyo this is an enormous proportion of the population. The new arrangement was undoubtedly going to solve some abstract problems of equality in public institutions, but such considerations are of less real concern than what happens to one's own child in the new arrangement. While it is true that the trend to private schooling and to greater emphasis on the private educational sector in general represents but the continued expression of the long standing sense of hierarchy and status anxiety among urban Japanese, this time this motivational syndrome appears to be encouraging the creation of a new structural dividing line that threatens to divide the "middle class" into those able to keep up financially in the new competition and those that cannot. The notion of class interest and class consciousness, generally regarded as weakly developed in Japan, could very well take on a somewhat different character

if high school reforms in Tokyo and elsewhere continue to be pushed forward.

Tokyo seems to be seeking a new solution, however, and the other big cities continue to watch and wait. This spring (1976) the plan in Tokyo is to have a rearrangement of districts so each contains even fewer schools, but within each district the students that are admitted may choose which school they prefer. In cases where student applicants exceed places in a school, academic record will be the major criteria for acceptance. On the other hand, many of the newest districts contain either far too many resident ninth graders or far too few. The juggling of this problem will also be based partially on the criteria of academic record. Obviously, this latest plan is open to criticism as a major retreat. It also upsets many of the areas of the city that found some advantage in the earlier reformed arrangement (for example, the district that had the best record in 1975, in terms of national university acceptances, was able to collect 89,000 signatures on a petition to the school board opposing the new redistricting). The constant sense of uncertainty and confusion that these changes bring to parents and teachers alike is creating further alienation and this is now coupled with a solid elite reputation that many private schools have been able to develop during the last decade.

In my opinion, the power of the private sector in Japanese secondary education is now great enough to turn back all but the most thorough and heavily armed public sector reform efforts. Parental ambition has always been enormous, but not

until recently has the level of personal income been high enough and private school performance records been good enough to support a challenge to the public sector such as Tokyo has recently witnessed. In Japan, at least, the limits of educational reform are not only social structural (what Carnoy and Levin point to in their recent book The Limits of Educational Reform as resulting from the capitalist system); they also stem from such factors as industrial success, the persistence of traditional values regarding education and the practice of political liberalism after World War II. Public high school reform will not eliminate social stratification or educational elitism given the private school option. Furthermore, cities like Osaka that have not acted to reform are sending an increased number of their public high school graduates to Todai while they watch Tokyo squirm, and in Japan this remains a significant feather in a city's cap.

Ironically, nothing has caused the private side to grow in strength more than the various reforms undertaken in the public school realm. These reforms undertaken in the name of equal opportunity end up producing a situation that actually encourages less equality of actual outcome, for, as in the Tokyo example, it is the private high schools that are strengthened when public high schools are reformed. While no previous reforms at the high school level have been as dramatic as those of recent year, there have been many changes in curriculum and pedagogy aimed at undercutting the entrance exam syndrome and these lesser reforms have made private academic high schools more

appealing in a similar manner. Nada High School was a little known private school of low academic reputation before World War II. It collected its first group of talented students when the neighboring cities of Ashiya and Nishinomiya were excluded from the Kobe school district in an occupation period redistricting move.[21] The best students from those two areas could no longer attend Kobe's top public high school and went instead to Nada. After this Nada progressively picked up more and more of the very top students, especially as the top public high schools appeared to be losing their former competitive edge in the race to enter the national universities. Tokyo's private schools had not had much help of this sort from public sector reforms until 1967, but within a short period more than a half dozen private high schools in the Tokyo area have risen to Nada's level. The point in all of this is that the initiative for change has rested with officials and teachers of the public schools, not with parents or private schools. Public school reform has simply backfired--at least as far as education into the elite is concerned.

A poll of junior high school teachers in Osaka is worth noting here. In 1967, 1968, and 1969 they were asked whether a system like that just instituted in Tokyo was going to improve the quality of education. The number who doubted that reform would improve things remained constant around ten percent, but those confident that improvement would follow dropped from 43.4 percent to 36.3 percent in just two years while the response "too early to tell" rose steadily from 37.6 percdnt to 48.1 percent.

Undoubtedly, this last response now characterizes the thinking of a very large majority.

In conclusion I wish to point out what might be a rather tight fit between the material just presented and several recent studies of post-war social mobility. Hiroshi Mannari (1974) concludes his survey of the family and educational backgrounds of business leaders in 1970 and 1960 with the following remarks:

> As societies become more industrialized, the amount of elite mobility also increases. Japan's industrialization in particular has been accompanied by a great increase of demand for elite in recent periods. If we compare the 1970 Japanese business leaders to those of 1960, our important finding is the emergence of a certain closing tendency in elite recruitment. Sons of laborers and lower white collar workers are substantially less represented in 1970 than in 1960. Landlords and farmers, who were the single largest source of business leaders in 1960, have been decreasing in proportion. Sons of owners of large business firms have also decreased. The main recruitment sources of business leaders have shifted to sons of executives of large business business firms, government officials and professions, all upper white collar groups.

The "closing tendency" he observes undoubtedly is explained by numerous factors including demographic shifts in parental generation occupation structure and so forth, yet the point that instead of greater social mobility Japan may have been caught up in a trend toward less mobility as early as the fifties is not to be taken lightly.

Cummings and Naoi (1974) take the issue a step further in their reanalysis of Tominaga's material on trends in the

relative weight of background factors in determining ultimate occupational rank. They point out that it is quite logically possible for educational attainment and family background factors to be positively correlated even though the usual ascription/achievement contrast implies this to be unlikely. They go on to note that "the Japanese schools have provided reasonably equal opportunities. . . . But at the university level, it is still sharply biased to those from the upper income classes. Moreover, at the most prestigious institutions this tendency is most marked (1974:266-67)." Besides noting the progressive advance of educational attainment as a factor in the overall occupational picture, the authors also note "evidence that family background is increasing in importance." Here, in all probability, is the heart of a critical social issue for modern Japan. Post-war education, although more inclusive and "democratic" has also become a field of competition in which the trend is toward a greater influence for family background factors. The "neutrality" of the public educational system (that is, its formal provision of equal opportunity) alone is not sufficient to stem this tendency.[22]

As Japanese society becomes more like a meritocracy due to the persistent growth of large organizations that stress educational criteria in hiring and promotion, the place of the educational system in the overall determination of status naturally grows as Cummings and Naoi point out, but as education becomes more central to more of the populace, it also becomes more and more susceptible to the influence of intensified

differences in each family's capacity to compete in this arena. The Japanese meritocracy appears to have evolved in the direction of a relatively fixed status framework, characterized by much competition, but declining rates of mobility and this despite both official policies and popular belief to the contrary.

NOTES

[1]The preliminary research for this paper was made with the support of a Japan Foundation Fellowship and further assistance was received from the University of California at Santa Cruz Faculty Research Committee. I would like to thank members of the Japan seminar at the University of Washington and at Berkeley for many helpful comments and criticisms. Ronald P. Dore also offered many helpful suggestions regarding an earlier version of this paper.

[2]The overall rōnin situation has improved somewhat from the late fifties. The expansion of university places, that is, has reduced the percentage of rōnin among high school graduates and, similarly, the percentage of rōnin in entering university classes. See Azumi (1969:27) for a statistical portrait of the late fifties in this regard.

[3]Women students presently achieve from 10 to 25 percent of the undergraduate places at the national universities with the percentage smallest at Tokyo and Kyoto Universities at the top of the ranking.

[4]It is useful to note here that Japanese high schools experience a drop-out rate between one and two percent. Thus soon 90% of all Japanese 18 year olds will be high school graduates. This figure is considerably higher than for the U.S. where, thanks to a very high drop-out rate, only 75% of all U.S. eighteen year olds are graduating from high school. In fact, Japan is today probably the most educated nation in the world (by conventional standards) at both the high school and university levels of graduates in the relevant age cohort.

[5]These "democratization" trends in post-war education are documented statistically in Duke (1975).

[6]Since 1968 these figures have been collected and published every two years, but from 1961 when their collection

began until 1968 only two reports were made. Information collected before 1961 on university students' family income and background are sparse and very difficult to decipher.

[7]The "demographic factor" cannot be ignored, of course, if the relationship between income and educational achievement is to be thoroughly sorted out, especially since comparisons of social mobility between Japan and other societies would require such clarification. Furthermore, on the face of it, the role of national universities in 1961 (and presumably before) in encouraging upward mobility may have been quite remarkable if the demographic factor is significant, since the probability of low income students attending national universities then may actually have been better than for those from better off families, although a sorting out of male and female student patterns would also be absolutely essential before such a conclusion could be drawn.

[8]Yomiuri Shinbun, May 4, 1975. Also Ushiogi Morikazu writing in the Asahi Shinbun (Aug. 3, 1976) notes that statistics covering students at all the national universities show Tokyo and then Kyoto University students to come from wealthier homes on the average. He cites 1974 statistics showing the average Tokyo University student family having an annual income of 4,230,000 yen while the average for all national university students was only 2,790,000 yen.

[9]The category "private" here includes "national" (kokuritsu) high schools. These schools are "lab schools" (in Japanese termed fuzoku) of Education Departments of large national universities and for most purposes (admissions, educational approach, and so on) they are very similar to elite private schools. Throughout this paper the category "private high school" will include "national" high schools as well. "National" high schools are remarkably anomalous. They typically belong to schools of education committed in principle to reforms designed

to undermine the exam oriented education syndrome, yet they actually epitomize that syndrome and, rather than being experimental in the usual "lab" school mold, they typically use their special autonomy and resources for the purpose of excelling in the ancient process of preparing for entrance exams.

This situation, incidentally, parallels the ambiguity of most intellectuals' position regarding educational elitism. Their leftist perspective leads them to public criticism, but privately they remain anxious that their own (the parents') status (gained, of course, through elite education) be replicated by their children through their success in school. I am indebted to Irwin Scheiner for pointing out this general paradox.

[10]The percentage of students from the top ten high schools in Tokyo University entrance statistics in terms of the type of high school are:

Year	1955	1960	1965	1970	1975
Public	80	76	60	36	13
Private	11	16	23	39	54
National	9	8	17	25	33

Source: Sandei Mainichi, April 6, 1975

[11]Almost exactly one-third of all applicants to Tokyo University come from schools within Tokyo-to itself. Private and national high schools accounted for 63% of these (Sandei Mainichi, June 1, 1975).

[12]Sankei Shinbun (January 20, 1975) carried an article citing statistics that revealed that while the average monthly cost of Tokyo public high school to each family was 2,300 yen per month, the average for a private high school was 12,500 yen monthly in fees plus an annual charge that averaged to 105,800 yen "tuition (nyūgakukin). Private schools often have assorted other fees and expected contributions that are difficult to categorize. Yomiuri Shinbun (June 26, 1974) reported an average monthly fee

for the 81 private high schools in Osaka of 17,200 yen and an average total annual cost of 220,000 yen or 31 times the cost of public high schools. An average cost per family of between $600 and $700 might thus be a fair estimate for private urban high schools. Finally, the cost of top private schooling is typically only slightly above that for the low status private high schools. There are also some notably more expensive girls' private schools and a few low status schools that cost annually less than $400.

[13]One illustration of the generally lower status and quality of private high schools is their lower per-student expenditures. For the average public high school student 227,512 yen was spent annually while this amount dropped to 99,848 yen for private school students (Sankei Shinbun, January 20, 1975).

[14]It is important to note here that the stratification of high schools serves to greatly enhance the conduct of education for the more talented half of the student population. Urban public secondary education in Japan evidences remarkable excellence at the top and appallingly low morale and ineffectiveness at the bottom. There are many academic reasons to praise Japanese urban public secondary education if the comparison is, say, with American urban public high schools, since unquestionably the overall results are better in Japan.

[15]Night schools have an extra year.

[16]Reported in Nihon Keizai Shinbun October 14, 1974.

[17]See Fukuya Masashi (1969).

[18]According to statistics carried in the weekly magazine Sandei Mainichi (April 6, 1975, p. 172) no <u>public</u> high school in Kyoto was listed among the top twenty schools sending students to Kyoto University, although two Kyoto high schools (one private and one "national") were among the top ten. Even considering

the schools sending but one or two students in the overall picture, Kyoto public high schools were superseded by public schools in numerous other cities and prefectures. Cities like Osaka, Nagoya, and Kobe were especially notable in this total. Their "unreformed" system was shown to be advantageous.

[19]This account of the response to Tokyo's efforts at reform is based primarily on numerous newspaper articles especially a series appearing in the Kumamoto Nichinichi, July 30-August 9, 1975. See also Mainichi Shinbun, September 12, 1974, for broad statistical coverage. Also, I have used materials on high school attendance published by Tōkyō-to Kyōiku Kenkyūsho (1971).

[20]Perhaps there is no connection with reform engendered changes, but the rōnin rate from Tokyo public high schools in 1974 was 30.3 percent overall and 42.2 percent for males. The 30.3 percent rate was reported to be an all-time high for Tokyo public schools and it compares with a 25.8 percent rate for Osaka while the two cities had almost exactly the same rate of high school graduates going to work (Mainichi Shinbun, September 12, 1974).

[21]I am indebted to Professor Robert Ozaki, a student of Kobe High School at the time, for recounting this episode to me.

[22]One more factor of probable significance to the interrelationship of income and education that must be properly evaluated before a firm conclusion can be reached on the trends in family background factors in elite education is the place of urban-rural differences. The average income of Tokyo families is approximately three times as high as the average income of families in the more rural prefectures. In 1972 Tokyo high school graduates were going on to university at the rate of 49.9 percent (41.3 for Osaka) while the rates were 16.7, 14.1, and 14.9 respectively for Fukushima, Aomori, and Iwate (Dukō, 1975). Comparisons of changes over time in rates of university

attendance for these two types of areas might very well highlight another crucial cause for the shifts to a smaller proportion of students from poor families in both the total and national university populations.

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